



CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Phone:

10 March 1986

Meg Greenfield
Editor of the Editorial Page
THE WASHINGTON POST
1150 15th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20071

Dear Meg:

I would appreciate you running the following in your "Letters to the Editor" section.

There are only three accurate parts of THE WASHINGTON POST's 5 March story entitled "CIA Deputy Chief McMahon Resigns." These are:

- John McMahon resigned as Deputy Director of Central Intelligence;
- The picture is indeed of Mr. McMahon;
- Deputy Director for Intelligence, Dr. Robert Gates, has been nominated by the President to succeed McMahon.

Numerous allegations against Mr. McMahon contained in the rest of the POST's story are false. Notably:

- The POST implies that Mr. McMahon retired because an "interagency group in charge of covert operations decided on a significant escalation of four paramilitary operations." That is incorrect. As Mr. McMahon said and as the White House's announcement of Mr. McMahon's resignation stated, he retired for purely personal reasons. The POST leads its readers to believe that its "anonymous" sources know Mr. McMahon's mind better than he does.

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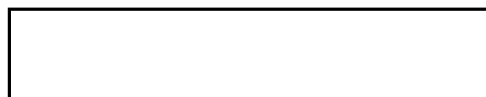
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- The POST asserts that "the departure of McMahon...clears the way for a more activist policy of CIA intervention that this Agency's Director, William J. Casey, has been promoting." As you should be aware, whatever administration is in power--President Reagan's in this case--makes foreign policy, not the Central Intelligence Agency. The CIA's functions are to collect, analyze and disseminate information on foreign policy developments to those who do make policy--the President and his National Security Council--and to assist them in the decisionmaking process. Mr. Casey is an advisor to the NSC, but is not a voting member. CIA also is charged with conducting counterintelligence overseas and undertaking such other activities as the President may direct. Each decision by the President to task CIA with such activities, sometimes referred to as "covert action," is reported to the oversight committees in Congress within 48 hours. Since the CIA does not, as the POST suggests, have its own foreign policy, Mr. McMahon's presence or departure from the Agency will not in itself decide the course of U.S. foreign policy.
- According to the POST, "McMahon opposed increased U.S. involvement in Third World conflicts." Nothing could be further from the truth. As Mr. McMahon has stated, "I support the President's policies in Afghanistan, Nicaragua and the Third World at large and execute his directives to the fullest extent." Congressional testimony makes clear that Mr. McMahon is not discontent with the President's policies in these areas as the POST and others have alleged; he has, in fact, been a strong supporter of these policies.
- The POST reports that a lobby has taken credit for Mr. McMahon's resignation. Such a claim by a misinformed and misguided group is absurd and deserves no further comment.

I could go on, but enough said.

It is a pity that a distinguished Agency officer and public servant who has given 34 years of his life in outstanding service of his country should be so maligned when he regretfully retires for truly personal reasons.

Sincerely,



A
George V. Lauder
Director, Public Affairs

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